Bang Chan Canal bissected

the community and joined, about one mile south, Sāensaeb Canal, a broad old waterway connecting Bangkok and Minburī with the canal network of the central plains. A well-raised, year-round road which ran between Bangkok, 20 miles to the southwest, and Minburī, two miles east, cut through one side of the area. On it lay Bang Khūat, another community, about eight kilometers from Bang Chan (cf. Kaufman:1960), and a cluster of houses called "Kilō paet," (Kilō 8) both west of Bang Chan and nearer to Bangkok. A shallow canal flanked this road most of the way.

The town of Minburī with district offices, shops, and pharmacists, and a good-sized Muslim population was well-known to most of the residents of Bang Chan. Its middle school drew from the surrounding farming countryside, including Bang Chan, those few pupils whose educational aspirations led them beyond the local elementary school. Minburī had electricity, but no telephone or telegraph facilities.

For nine months of the year, while Bang Chan lay under water, most of the marketing was done through boat-vendors who plied the canals. During the dry months, or for large festivities, people marketed at Minburī, Kilō paet, or in Bangkok.

The Thai government administered Bang Chan through two district offices (amphoe), one located in Minburī, the other in Bangkapi, close to Bangkok. The common boundary of their respective districts happened to run through the middle of the community. Seven local head men, each in charge of one of the seven hamlets (mūban) into which the entire community was divided, reported to one or the other district office. They transmitted instructions from their superiors to the farmers, maintained order mostly by their personal prestige, and kept the village census more or less up to date by recording and reporting marriages, births, and deaths.

At the center of the community was the cherished Buddhist temple with its abbot, monks, and novices, numbering 15 to 50 depending on the season. The elementary public school, occupying one of its buildings,[1] was attended by 300 children aged eight to fifteen, both Buddhist and Muslim. The temple compound was surrounded by a number of houses, including a cafe and stalls for small vendors. A small country mosque (surao) in another hamlet was the religious center for the Muslim minority, some of whose children attended another school just outside the Bang Chan community. The abbot and the imam, the respective local heads of the two religious faiths, were of importance in the community as leaders.

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1. A new large school has since been built away from the temple compound.